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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the problems encountered by part-time English instructors at Cuyahoga Community College (CCC) and describes an effort undertaken to address them. An informal survey in the spring of 1988 of 36 part-time instructors as well as administrators and program coordinators found general agreement that, despite the provision of sample syllabi, lists of resource faculty and mentors, part-time faculty development efforts fell short of the need. Specifically, from the 22 questionnaires returned, five points were identified as matches and/or mismatches between part-time teachers and the delivery and management of instruction: teaching experience, degree preparation, self-engagement, the diversity of the pool, and the expressed need for professional development. With respect to teaching experience, only six of the respondents were full-time tutors, a few had no previous teaching experience, and those with experience generally had not taught adults. In the area of degree preparation, seven of the respondents had degrees in English, which does not guarantee experience in teaching the writing process; and some had only degrees in related fields, such as speech or education. Only four of the respondents were actively engaged in some kind of advanced degree program, and three of those degrees were related to language learning and literature. The diversity of the pool presented a problem in that most of the instructors were white, whereas the student population was predominantly Black, Hispanic, and Asian. Thus, a problem existed in the cultural definitions which the part-time instructors brought to the classroom. Finally, a discrepancy was found between expressed needs for professional development and programs offered by CCC. In an effort to alleviate these problems, the college has developed Sustaining Academic Literacy, a professional development program consisting of six sessions, spread out over two quarters. It is intended to give part-time teachers a clear overview of the English curriculum and to identify and respond to their concerns. (JMC)

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MATCHES AND MISMATCHES: WHAT PART-TIME ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS KNOW AND WANT TO LEARN
Carolyn Gordon

Good Morning Everybody

I'm going to try to move through my contribution quickly this morning so that we won't be too far off schedule. As I heard, most of you are involved with a broad range of part-timers from various disciplines. The information I have for you today focuses on English, part-timers in English college-wide. I am hoping that the information I have for you today about some developments we are working on might be helpful to you as you move forward because it could be the one direction we might look is within disciplines to help part-timers who need direction.

Let me begin by referring to the gentleman who mentioned that we seem to have created a monster here. And we wonder how we got into this mess with part-timers. They are wonderful people, but sometimes they need help, and sometimes we don't always give them the help they need.

I think we got into this situation in the 70's when the Carnegie Commission suggested that one way to cut costs, in anticipation of declining enrollments and decreased funding, would be to hire more part-timers. Enrollments have not declined but funding did.

So here in the late 80's, we see that we have more part-timers than could be healthy.

As I travel to professional meetings within English in the last two-three years, I've heard in the Conference for College Composition and Communication within the National Council of Teachers of English and the Modern Language Association the call for more support for part-timers in English. Those of you who are from the Universities may know that some part-timers in English are teaching assistants as part of their degree program, but for the most part, our part-timers in English are not associated with any Masters or Doctoral level programs. They are there because they enjoy the work, and they need the money. But these calls are coming from our own disciplines to begin to look at our part-timers in English, and we should begin to support them in more ways.

You have in your packet the brochure that helps you understand EPIC, Cuyahoga Community College's mentoring program for part-timers. EPIC is in its second year. EPIC addresses the needs of new part-timers. Interestingly though, within English, college-wide, every year we have 100 returning part-timers so at each of our three campuses, we estimate each term we have 35 to 40. During any quarter college-wide we have 100 part-timers in English.

To get a better handle on this problem, in the spring I surveyed at Metro campus part-timers in English. I sent out surveys to thirty-six. Twenty-two were returned. I also interviewed

administrators who hire and dismiss part-timers, and program coordinators. I serve at Metro in the English department as a program coordinator; that means that I have released time to work with the administrator, assisting with part-time staffing. As part of this study, that I thought was needed, I did interview former program coordinators at Metro Campus. From the interviews, I found agreement among program coordinators and administrators that despite the fact that we do supply English part-timers with sample syllabi, lists of resource faculty that they may contact, and in some instances, mentors, it was agreed that we simply do not do enough. Part-timers and full-timers are like ships that pass in the night.

So the overall question of the study became: What is professional development? We say that there are three interrelated purposes of professional development. The first is to enhance teaching effectiveness, which is related to the second purpose, maximizing student learning. Once that purpose is achieved we feel we are attaining the third purpose, college policies and goals.

If we look at faculty development in that light, then let's take that view and measure what we do with part-timers. In the survey, I asked part-timers about issues related to delivering instruction and managing instruction. There are five points that I have identified as matches and mismatches in delivery and managing of instruction. I'll go through these briefly. The first is teaching experience; the second is degree preparation; the third is self engagement, meaning what kind of activities do part-timers engage in on their own; the fourth is the diversity

of the pool, the pool of students and the pool of part-timers; and finally, expressed need for professional development.

Now I mentioned to you that there was a return of 22 questionnaires - roughly 60% From that group, six were instructional assistants (full-time tutors). A few of them had no previous teaching experience. The others reported that they had on average eight years of public school experience. We know from our own work experience that these adults don't often come having experienced teaching other adults so in that sense, they may be out of step with the population they are going to work with and may need help with understanding an adult urban population.

The second area where I found matches and mismatches was in kinds of degrees earned. Among the twenty-two, I found that about one-third or seven had earned B.A. or M.A. degrees in English. As you look at other disciplines, you know that within disciplines that there are specializations. So within English we are looking at academic backgrounds in writing process, reading process, and analyzing literature. Part-timers who have come to us with B.A.'s in English don't necessarily indicate that they have been taught or learned much about writing process. They may know literature but not writing process. So we have these discrepancies. Although the B.A. is in English, those individuals may have no teaching experience, and we found that at one period, as you have mentioned, the pool of available part-timers was rather shallow. As a consequence, in addition to

B.A.'s in English, we were hiring individuals who had related degrees: Speech and baccalaureate degrees in education. So we find problems.

The next area is in self-engagement. How many of the part-timers are on their own trying to learn more in order to do their jobs better? From among the twenty-two, we found four that are actively engaged in some kind of advanced degree program. Three of those degrees were related to language learning and literature. One area that I am not going to mention and we have alluded to is pay. One problem for the part-timer is having enough money to also go to school and earn a new degree to support his or her own professional development, and pay is an issue for our own part-timers, especially at the Metropolitan Campus where a few blocks away the same individuals can teach the same courses at Cleveland State University and earn much more money than we pay per credit hour.

The next area was diversity of the pool, and as with the general population, we have found that those part-timers were mostly white whereas the student population is predominantly African-American, Hispanic, and Asian. So we have some concerns about cultural definitions that part-timers bring to the classroom. On the survey, there was one item that asked the part-timers to indicate what they perceived as their students' cultural background, if it seemed to them that their students came from an American middle-class cultural background. The part-timers believed that they came from backgrounds they would describe as American middle-class; whereas, the part-timers reported that

eighty percent of their students were minority students. So we have some matches and mismatches on this point.

The fifth point was that part-timers did express a need for professional development. They felt that some of the efforts that the College offered did not always address their specific needs within the discipline. They needed to know more about an adult urban population, namely men and women who were at least twenty-eight, twenty-nine years old and who fit the profile as we know of today's students. They felt they needed to know more about delivering and managing instruction in the classroom, such as ways to vary presentation of materials, to evaluate students, and to manage that load of content we expect them to deliver.

And finally, they felt they needed to know more about how the courses they teach fit into the English curriculum. We don't have an English Department, but the Communications Division policies and College policies and goals are kinds of information about which they need to know more.

Let me show a couple of samples of responses to this point about their sense of integration and their feeling that they need further integration into the college community and whether the current part-timers' program serves that need. Let me explain what this item asks. It says, "Comment on any previous orientation or faculty development activity for part-time instructors in English that you have experienced at CCC and describe the weaknesses and our strengths that you perceived about the experience". The response is "often too long getting

started". "Too many announcements/acknowledgements". "Material not particularly relevant". You may be familiar with these kinds of responses for those kinds of orientation sessions where you are trying to reach a broad group. So we see that even within English, part-timers feel that there needs to be some "fine-tuning" on kinds of activities designed especially for them.

Here is the second response that I think is a little more inclusive than the last one on the same item. "Orientation activities have been redundant, repetitive, dry, even with the addition of punch and goodies. Statistics and roses are nice but do not help a great deal in dealing with classroom problems, policies, and programs. It has been refreshing to be invited on rare occasions to department meetings. However, meeting times were difficult and purposes for the meetings served little purpose for part-timers." The College has been concerned about this situation with English part-timers for several reasons. Not only because that pool of part-timers is so fluid, but because we are concerned about the overall academic literacy attainments of students.

The College is moving forward with a project that will get underway in January and will run from Winter through Spring Quarters, January through June, 1989. We are calling the project Sustaining Academic Literacy.

Three faculty collaborators will be identified at each campus. Jim Leonard is the faculty collaborator who will be working at the Western Campus. Incidentally, this fall, Jim was awarded the

Ralph Besse Teaching Excellence Award. Students and other staff and faculty at the Western Campus voted Jim the most excellent teacher this past year. So for the project, Jim will act as the Western Campus faculty collaborator. Each one will be responsible for contacting part-timers in English, working together as a team with the two faculty collaborators from the other two campuses, and planning sessions where part-timers will meet, and hopefully, full-timers will come. Of course, they will be invited, but the College is willing to provide an incentive for part-timers in English to come. The College has decided it is willing to pay them for attending development sessions, three in Winter Quarter, three in Spring Quarter. At those sessions we intend to give part-timers a clear overview of the English curriculum and then for the second, third, and fourth sessions to identify what their concerns are and design the sessions to respond to their concerns. We know one concern is a sense of integration into the college community. If they ask for faculty or other resource people to come in and meet with them, we will try to address that concern. Throughout the process we will evaluate how the part-timers feel about their participation. At the end of the sessions in June, we expect to produce a handbook for part-time instructors in English that will be available to continuing or returning part-timers. I prefer the word returning because we have part-timers who do not continue from term to term. They drop in and drop out. I prefer the term returning. These handbooks will be available to returning part-time instructors who are not considered new and part of the FIPSE program. Any questions, comments? Yes?

How long and much will the sessions run? We have called for six sessions, three each quarter, and the College is willing to pay them $25 an hour for attendance at each session. The funds for this project are coming from a state grant, an Academic Challenge grant. Any other questions?

About how long will the sessions run? About two, three hours. From the survey done in the Spring, part-timers at the Metro Campus felt the best hours were between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. weekdays. Evening classes begin at 5:30 P.M. We know all part-timers will not come because of their scheduling, but we are hoping with this small incentive that we will get a sizeable participation.

How much will the collaborators be paid? The collaborators have released time, reassigned time. We have the full support of the Office of Faculty Development at the College because we know college-wide we have a serious need to help part-timers understand what delivering and managing instruction means. Yes?

How many former part-time instructors have been hired on as full-time? Very few. I have been at the College ten years, and I think four. To give you an idea of our strength this quarter at the Metro Campus, and I am sure the figures are comparable at the other two campuses, we have two faculty people on leave, and we have seventeen teaching. We have thirty-four part-timers. Any other questions? Thank you for your time, and enjoy your day.

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